

What is claimed is:

1. A method to identify counterfeit merchandise comprising the steps of:  
inspecting merchandise for a digital watermark; and  
identifying counterfeit merchandise by the absence of a watermark.
2. The method according to claim 1, wherein the digital watermark includes an identifier, said method further comprising a step of accessing information with the identifier.
3. The method according to claim 2, further comprising a step of identifying a counterfeit through comparison of the merchandise with the assessed information.
4. The method according to claim 3, wherein the digital watermark comprises a fragile watermark, and wherein the absence of a watermark comprises a degradation of the fragile watermark.
5. An inspector network comprising:  
a database comprising a plurality of entries, at least one of the entries including merchandise information;  
an inspector computer comprising:  
an input device to capture an image of merchandise;  
a computer including electronic processing circuitry and electronic memory circuitry, wherein said electronic memory circuitry has computer executable instructions stored thereon, said instructions including instructions to:  
detect a digital watermark in an image captured by said input device;  
decode a detected watermark, the watermark including at least plural information bits; and to  
request information from said database corresponding to the plural

information bits; and

a network interface to communicate with said database.

6. The inspector network according to claim 5, wherein said inspector computer generates a signal when a digital watermark is not detected by said computer executable detect instructions.

7. The inspector network according to claim 5, further comprising computer executable instructions stored in said electronic memory circuits to generate a graphical user interface.

8. A method to track inventory or product tags comprising the steps of:  
embedding a digital watermark in merchandise, the digital watermark including at least one identifier;  
establishing a data record to be indexable according to the at least one identifier;  
and  
updating the data record to reflect inventory status.

9. The method according to claim 8, wherein the digital watermark is embedded directly on the merchandise.

10. The method according to claim 8, wherein the digital watermark is embedded in at least one of a merchandise tag, label, invoice, shipping instructions, and packaging.

11. The method according to claim 8, wherein the inventory status comprises at least one of current location, shipping history, destination information, handling instructions, customs information, inspector instructions, batch number, manufacture information, and shipping dates.